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Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments; human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Letter dated 27 October 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the letter addressed to Dodou Diene, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, by the Permanent Representative of Italy to the International Organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Paolo Bruni, on 25 October 2004 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the enclosed letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 103; and under agenda item 105, with particular reference to sub-items (a) and (c) thereof.

(*Signed*) Aldo **Mantovani**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 27 October 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 25 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the International Organizations in Geneva addressed to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

As you know, Italy is very grateful to you for your work on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and for your reports concerning these subjects. We do attach great importance to the system of special mechanisms that the Commission on Human Rights has developed over the years and we reaffirm our strong support and our will to cooperate with such mechanisms in order to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. Italy believes that special rapporteurs and other mechanisms have the paramount duty to respond to the credible, verified and reliable information they receive.

In this respect, the Italian authorities were surprised to see in your study on the issue of political platforms that promote or incite racial discrimination (A/59/330) that two political parties, members of the current coalition Government (namely, the National Alliance and the Northern League) were included in the "list of openly racist and xenophobic political and paramilitary groups" in Europe, and that the "representatives of these parties spread racist anti-immigrant discourse in Italian society and have obtained the adoption of a particularly strict immigration law (the Bossi Fini law ..." (para. 25).

My authorities have also noticed that, in paragraph 20 of the said study, Italy is referred to as "another example of this type of coalition government between the right and the extreme right", which is previously described in the same paragraph as enabling the extreme right "to enter national governments and, to some extent, impose its racist and xenophobic platform".

I wish to recall that the National Alliance and the Northern League are member parties of a Government which has made the fight against racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism a priority of its political action. Furthermore, as you know, this Government has recently created a special committee entrusted with monitoring the functions of these phenomena at the national level. Moreover, this Government is seriously engaged in the implementation of the Durban Plan of Action to fight racism and intolerance and is planning a number of other relevant initiatives in this field.

Finally, it should be recalled that the Bossi-Fini law, inspired by the same principles, contributes to the prevention and combating of clandestine immigration and its criminal exploitation, thus improving quality of life of immigrants and discouraging the trafficking of human beings.

I will therefore be grateful if you will take the above-mentioned considerations duly into account. Meanwhile, Italy will ask the United Nations Secretariat in New York to include the present letter among the official documents of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly as observations of the Italian Government on paragraphs 20 and 25 of your study.

(*Signed*) Paolo **Bruni**
Ambassador